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ACTION PRM-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AF-00	AID-00	CA-00	CIAE-00	INL-00
	USNW-00	DODE-00	DS-00	EAP-00	OIGO-00	UTED-00	H-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	DCP-00	NSAE-00	NIMA-00	MCC-00
	GIWI-00	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	FMP-00	BBG-00	IIP-00
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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
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INFO ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS ACCRA 000311

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SENSITIVE

FOR POLOFFS, REFUGEE COORDINATOR, AF/W AND PRM

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [GH](#) [TO](#)
SUBJECT: GOG AND UNHCR PREPARING FOR POSSIBLE INFLUX OF
TOGOLESE REFUGEES

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The death of former President Eyadema has added a new wrinkle to the historically troubled relationship between Ghana and Togo - despite President Kufuor's close relationship with the Eyadema family. Anticipating trouble, several dozen Togolese have already been observed trekking across Ghana's porous borders. GOG officials and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR] are formulating contingency plans in case those numbers swell. Under consideration are two sites located 50 kilometers from the Togolese border that could be used for sheltering refugees in case violence or mass arrests provoke, as in 1993, the exodus of thousands of Togolese. End Summary.

Squabbling Sisters

2. (U) Historically, Ghana and Togo have had a troubled relationship, with their shared Ewe tribe at the center of tensions. This ethnic group includes former Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings and many of Togo's opposition politicians, most notably Togolese opposition leader Gilchrist Olympio, who was born in Ghana's Volta Region and whose mother has retained Ghanaian citizenship. While in power during the 1980's and 1990's, Rawlings was often accused of encouraging the Togolese opposition, while Togolese President Eyadema tried to undercut Rawlings' support in Ghana. Both sides have been implicated in cross-border violence that resulted in the deaths of President Eyadema's wife, Togolese opposition figures resident in Ghana, and Ghanaian officials manning a border post. For more than a decade, the two countries did not have diplomatic relations.

3. (U) The GOT crackdown in 1993 against innocent civilians in Lome resulted in hundreds of thousands of Togolese fleeing into Benin and Ghana. The GOG documented 150,000 refugees but the total number was closer to 250,000, since many Ewes on the Ghanaian side of the border sheltered Togolese in their homes. The GOG quickly set up a makeshift refugee camp in Kriklo; unfortunately, its location close to Ghana's eastern border made it subject to occasional Togolese bombardment. Eventually, refugees were offered permanent residence in Ghana, asylum in a third country, or transportation to the Krisan refugee camp, near Ghana's western border with Cote d'Ivoire. Some refugees chose to move to Accra.

Close Ties in the Past Four Years

4. (U) Diplomatic relations were restored in 1994 and improved further with the election in 2000 of Ghana's President Kufuor, who had received support from Eyadema during the election campaign. In addition to choosing Togo as the venue for his first official foreign trip in 2001, Kufuor has traveled regularly to the Eyadema family's home village of Pya, attended the funeral of President Eyadema's brother, and (unlike most high ranking members of the diplomatic community) participated in annual celebrations commemorating Eyadema's assumption of power (via a coup d'etat). Moreover, as Chairman of ECOWAS from 2002 - 2004, Kufuor never criticized Togo's human rights violations.

The Border

15. (U) Today, despite the improvement in relations between Ghana and Togo, the border region remains a hotbed of smuggling and other undocumented cross-border activity. Some Ewes are known to farm land on one side of the frontier and live on the other. Although the GOG maintains police checkpoints between every village along the southernmost stretch of the Ghana-Togolese border, they are ineffective in deterring the smuggling of cheaper Togolese agricultural produce and other items imported duty-free into Togo. Since the 1956 plebiscite that led to the Volta Region joining Ghana rather than Togoland, most Ewes have regarded the frontier as an artificial demarcation line with little relevance to where they work, shop, or live. Moreover, the terrain, ranging from flat plains to rolling hills, poses few obstacles to anyone intent on getting from one side of the border to the other. On the Togolese side, the capital city of Lome extends to the border crossing.

Another Togolese Exodus?

16. (SBU) The GOG is developing contingency plans for a potential massive new influx of Togolese, if the current

political crisis in Togo heats up. During a joint GOG-UNHCR retreat in the Volta Region from February 8 - 10, officials toured the border and discussed possible sites - at least 50 kilometers from the border - for sheltering large numbers of fleeing Togolese. Ref Coord has learned that two locations within the Volta Region have been identified, but approval was pending further discussion with the Volta Regional Minister and tribal chiefs next week. Despite the inherent difficulties in planning for the unpredictable, Ghana is attempting to be somewhat better prepared to manage a possible deluge of refugees. One member of Ghana's Refugee Board expressed his satisfaction that the international community, including ECOWAS, was keeping up the pressure on the GOT; he hoped the Togo conundrum could be resolved peacefully.

Comment

17. (SBU) Comment: Experts in Ghana who deal with refugees are keeping a nervous eye fixed on Togo. We are encouraged by their cooperation with the UNHCR in planning for contingencies. If there is a large influx, Ewes on the Ghanaian side of the border would welcome their "brothers and sisters"; elsewhere, there would be more grumbling about Ghana's open door policy toward refugees and GOG resources could be strained.

18. (U) This cable was cleared by Embassy Lome prior to transmission.
YATES

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